

**Illinois River Coordinating Council  
December 5, 2006 Meeting Minutes  
Byron Colby Barn at Prairie Crossing, Grayslake**

**Call to Order:**

Marc Miller, Office of Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

**Roll Call:**

Marc Miller, Office of the Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, called the roll:

**Citizen Members**

Lee Bunting, Richard Worthen, Doug Blodgett (for Michael Reuter), Daphne Mitchell, Nancy Erickson (for Wendell Shauman), and Margaret Frisbie.

**State Agency Members**

Dennis McKenna (IDOA) and Debbie Bruce (DNR)

**Ex-Officio Members**

Matt Sprenger (US FWS), Colonel Robert Sinkler (US ACE – Rock Island District), Colonel Jack Drolet (USACE – Chicago District), William Kruidenier (College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences, U of I), Chris Urban (US EPA) George Groschen (USGS), John Hubbert (USDA – NRCS), and John Rogner (US FWS).

**Members Absent**

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, William Graff (USDA – FSA), Commander Paul Mehler (US Coast Guard) and Doug Wilson (USDA – Rural Development).

**Approval of Minutes:**

Marc Miller asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the August 17, 2006 meeting held at the Dickson Mounds Museum. William Kruidenier moved to accept and Richard Worthen seconded the motion. The Council approved the minutes.

### **Opening Remarks:**

Chairman Quinn mentioned that the Great Lakes Commission has a sedimentation grant program and he encouraged organizations to apply for the grant. He thanked Lake County for the green infrastructure work that has been done to reduce the impacts of flooding. Chairman Quinn reminded the group that \$10 Million was put in the Capitol Budget for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and that his office is going to work on obtaining another \$10 Million for the upcoming fiscal year. He thanked the Prairie Crossing Community for hosting the meeting and commended them on their work for being a conservation community.

### **Member Comment Period:**

Members of the Council introduced themselves and explained how their agencies are involved and interacted with the IRCC.

Margaret Frisbie discussed the Clean Water Campaign. Friends of the Chicago River has established two ambitious goals for the Clean Water Campaign for the next two years. First, they want to expand research and build the case for completing TARP and controlling stormwater. Second, they will launch a public education campaign to build support at the local, state, and federal levels for improving the water quality of the Chicago River.

Dennis McKenna announced that Director Chuck Hartke of IDOA is a representative on the Gulf Hypoxia and Nutrient Task Force.

### **Prairie Crossing Water Conservation Practices:**

**Mike Sands – Prairie Crossing Environmental Team** discussed the water conservation practices in use at the Prairie Crossing community. One technique used by the community to protect and conserve water is the planting of native plants. Native landscaping serves an important function in cleansing the storm water on the site and protecting the water quality of lakes. Hardier and more sustainable, it requires less water and labor than traditional lawns or more formal plantings, prevents flooding and lowers maintenance costs. The site is designed so that stormwater is filtered through prairies and wetlands before entering into the on site lake. Due to this natural filtration the lake is okay for swimming and was also stocked with endangered minnows by IDNR.

### **County Farmland Preservation Ordinances:**

**Anita Zurbrugg – American Farmland Trust (AFT)** gave a presentation on County Farmland Preservation Ordinances in Illinois. AFT has a program known as the Farm

and Ranch Lands Protection Program, which aims to protect the nation's agricultural lands from development and fragmentation. Through this program grants are awarded to well-established and active state, local and private farm and ranch land protection programs. Currently, Illinois does not have a statewide farmland protection program. Kane County created the first local farmland protection program in the state. A few other collar counties are working on developing ordinances and programs.

### **Lake County Stormwater Management Plans:**

**Patty Werner – Lake County Stormwater Management Commission (SMC)** gave a presentation on stormwater management plans. Watershed planning is targeted towards those watersheds with system protection needs and flooding problems. A watershed management plan typically includes updated floodplain mapping, goals and objectives for the watershed, and an action plan that outlines steps to aid in the reduction of flooding, improvement in water quality and overall enhancement of the natural drainage system. Impacts of new development are also addressed in the action recommendations. Watershed planning is a grassroots effort that relies on the involvement of landowners, local government, non-profit groups, and organizations.

### **Removal of North Avenue Dam on the Fox River:**

**Steve Andras – City of Aurora** discussed the removal of the North Avenue Dam on the Fox River. State Division of Waterways constructed the dam on the Fox River in 1950. The purpose for the dam is uncertain but local sources indicated that the dam was built to alleviate the exposure of the riverbed during the low flow summer months. In 1997, as part of a downtown revitalization project, the City of Aurora made a Joint Application for a river-level pedestrian walkway and bicycle system called Fox Walk. Part of this proposal included the complete removal of the North Avenue Dam. Due to funding issues, the project was put on hold until 2005. During the 2005-2006 winter months, the dam was removed by notching down sections of the dam. The crest of the dam was removed in less than 5 days. Restoration of the banks was performed in the Spring of 2006 and consisted of native shrub plantings. To date, no negative impacts have been observed. The removal of the dam restored fish passage and converted the impounded river reach to a free-flowing condition, which has created a better habitat for native aquatic species, including smallmouth bass.

### **Dam Safety Initiative:**

**Marc Miller – Office of Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn** provided an update on the Dam Safety Initiative. The Capitol Development Board, DNR and the Lt. Governor's Office worked together to choose a contractor to work on reviewing 25 publicly owned dams for public safety. The contractor chosen to work on the project is CTE, and is

beginning its review of the dams. The Lieutenant Governor's Office is also exploring opportunities in the Capitol Budget for funding of signage, risk communication, and removal and modification of dams.

### **Green Infrastructure Calculator and CNT Website Tools:**

**Bill Eyring - The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT)** gave a presentation on four of the tools it has developed to promote alternative approaches to stormwater management. The first tool is a series of low-cost demonstrations of "green" infrastructure. This infrastructure has natural landscape features and preserved open space that can transform water resource management in a neighborhood. The second is the "Pocket Guide to Green Solutions", an outreach tool for newcomers to green infrastructure and a field guide for watershed activists interested in organizing community action. The third tool is an on-line calculator ([greenvalues.cnt.org](http://greenvalues.cnt.org)) that evaluates the performance and costs of green infrastructure options. The last tool, developed in partnership with the Openlands Project, is the Natural Connections website [www.greenmapping.org](http://www.greenmapping.org), which allows users to choose data layers and create customized maps.

### **National Great Rivers Research and Education Center and RiverWatch Update:**

**William Kruidenier – National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC)** gave an update on the center's field station and also the RiverWatch program. In October 2006, NGRREC received \$6.8 million from the State of Illinois to aid in the construction of a Field Station at Melvin Price Lock and Dam 26 near Alton. The field station is designed to coexist with its natural setting and will strive to achieve LEED Gold Certification. Construction is to begin in the fall of 2007 and the estimated date of completion is March of 2009. In 2006, several Illinois high school teachers expressed an interest in the RiverWatch program. NGRREC plans to work with them in the summer of 2007 to bring RiverWatch into their classrooms. The University of Illinois is creating a database to record all the info collected by RiverWatch volunteers. This database should be ready by the summer of 2007 and will provide a long-term circulation of RiverWatch data.

### **Illinois Wildlife Action Plan:**

**James Renn – IDNR** discussed the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan. In the fall of 2005, IDNR, along with help from over 150 partners, completed a wildlife action plan to determine the wildlife and places that are in the greatest need of conservation. The final version of the plan involves action. It is not just an inventory of species in need but it outlines the particular needs of species that are on the decline in order to stabilize the

populations and also increase them. The development of this plan allows Illinois to participate in the federal State Wildlife Grant Program.

### **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Update:**

**Debbie Bruce – IDNR** gave an update on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The program was open for continuous enrollment in July of 2006. Landowners who were not selected in the November 2005 lottery enrollment will be given preference for this sign-up.

### **Spoon River Incentives Program:**

**Jon Hubbert – USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service** gave an update on the Spoon River Incentives Program. For 2007, \$600,000 are set aside for the Spoon River Incentives Program. NRCS does not have a designated part of the watershed to do work in but IDNR is focusing on Cedar Creek and Haw Creek.

### **Other Business:**

Chairman Quinn announced that Marc Miller and John Marlin traveled to Arizona to accept the Innovative Program Award from the Council of State Governments for the Mud to Parks program.

Lee Bunting talked about the importance of the Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) and made a motion for the Council to send a letter of support for WRDA to Congress. Daphne Mitchell seconded the motion. The Council approved the motion.

### **Public Comment Period:**

Lee Butler, member of the Illinois Paddle Council, thanked Chairman Quinn and his office for the It's Our River Day effort. He encouraged the State to pass a bottle bill in order to prevent bottles and other types of containers from entering waterways.

Evan Craig, a volunteer with the Sierra Club, thanked Chairman Quinn for his support in the effort to reduce phosphorus at wastewater treatment facilities. He stressed the importance of loading models that estimate the impacts of construction projects.

Chris Urban mentioned that the US EPA has a website to estimate runoff from projects. It can be found at [www.epa.gov/waterspace](http://www.epa.gov/waterspace).

Stacy James, from Prairie Rivers Network, mentioned that IEPA introduced a draft

permit to regulate surface discharging septic systems. She encouraged the IRCC to push for a stronger permit.

**Adjournment:**

Chairman Quinn asked for a motion to adjourn. Lee Bunting moved to adjourn the meeting and Dennis McKenna seconded the motion. The Council approved the motion. Chairman Quinn adjourned the meeting at 4:21 pm.